

RETAIL PRICES - SEPTEMBER QUARTER, 1956.

Index numbers of retail prices for the September quarter of 1956 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases,
September Quarter, 1956.

City.	Aggregate All Groups.			All Groups, excluding Price Move- ments in Potatoes and Onions.		
	Index Number.	Increase from-		Index Number.	Increase from-	
		Sept. Qtr., 1955.	June Qtr., 1956.		Sept. Qtr., 1955.	June Qtr., 1956.
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2370	6.7	3.1	2287	3.5	1.1
Toowoomba ..	2404	6.8	2.6	2320	3.6	0.7
Rockhampton	2392	5.9	2.8	2319	3.0	1.4
Townsville	2478	6.6	2.2	2406	3.8	0.7
Bundaberg ..	2326	5.6	2.0	2249	2.5	0.4
Warwick ..	2357	6.0	2.4	2274	2.9	0.6

The All Groups Index Number for Brisbane showed an increase of 3.1 per cent. for the September quarter of 1956. This was the largest increase since the March quarter of 1952. Other Queensland cities showed similarly larger price rises than usual, ranging from 2.0 per cent. in Bundaberg up to Rockhampton's 2.8 per cent.

The most important contribution to the quarter's increases was made by abnormally large price rises in potatoes and onions, as supplies diminished rapidly and abnormal price movements which had begun to appear in previous quarters became very marked. To provide an indication of the recent trend of the index in respect of items not materially affected by these seasonal factors, an All Groups Index and a Food and Groceries Index, both excluding the effects of recent movements in the prices of potatoes and onions, are shown in addition to the usual complete index numbers on page 4 of this bulletin. Movements in the All Groups Index, excluding potatoes and onions, are shown in the table above.

The general trend of the All Groups Index Numbers for Brisbane, which had been rising steeply after the war, showed a distinct change in June, 1952, when it steadied to a much lower rate of increase. This new trend - about 0.6 per cent. increase per quarter - remained unchanged until the end of 1955, when the index again started to rise more rapidly, the increase for the next three quarters averaging 2.2 per cent. per quarter. Exclusion of the effects of potatoes and onions during this latter period, however, showed that the price rise for all of the rest of the regimen continued at much the same average quarterly rate as that maintained during 1952 to 1954.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, September Quarter, 1956.

City.	Food and Groceries.			Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1956.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1956.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1956.
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	233.3	6.3	1.5	280.6	0.7	130.3	0.8
Toowoomba ..	256.9	5.1	0.8	283.1	0.8	126.9	0.8
Rockhampton	214.4	4.3	0.7	274.7	1.2	139.1	0.7
Townsville	208.5	4.3	0.7	278.9	0.5	140.9	1.6
Bundaberg ..	214.8	4.4	0.6	277.8	-	124.5	0.8
Warwick ..	242.9	4.9	0.6	282.9	0.5	133.2	0.7

Note: A includes and B excludes price movements due to potatoes and onions.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, increases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for the six Queensland cities in which data are collected. In all the cities prices of potatoes and onions rose steeply. Other increases were in bread, sugar (the increase in price which affected only portion of the previous quarter operated throughout September quarter), seed tapioca (unchanged in Townsville), golden syrup, butter, cheese, and bacon and pork (unchanged in Townsville). Decreases occurred in prices of tea and eggs, and in beef in Townsville, Rockhampton, and Bundaberg (for the latter two cities this was the net effect of the price decreases which operated for portion of the previous quarter and smaller price increases which affected only part of September quarter). Mutton prices rose in Toowoomba.

Clothing and Footwear.

The clothing and footwear group showed small increases for five of the six cities, but remained unchanged for Bundaberg. Prices of men's suits showed increases in each of the six cities.

Miscellaneous.

The miscellaneous items index numbers showed small increases for the six cities, the main cause of this being increases in railway fares. There were also increases in the prices of gas in Brisbane and electricity in Townsville.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased in Brisbane (1.0 per cent.), Toowoomba (0.3 per cent.), and Rockhampton (5.0 per cent.), but remained stationary in the other three cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in September quarter, 1956, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rockhampton	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	19	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	11	1	0	0 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
Townsville	1	0	11	1	0	7 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	2	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	11 $\frac{1}{4}$
Bundaberg ..		19	7 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	11 $\frac{1}{4}$		15	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwick ..		19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	4		15	3	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	4

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Following an application for the resumption of automatic adjustments and an increase in the basic wage, the Court increased the basic wage for males in all States by 10s. from June, 1956, but did not restore the quarterly adjustments.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and 1s. 6d. for females was awarded. Similar increases followed the index number for the September quarter of 1955, but no change occurred for the December quarter of 1955. Following publication of the index numbers for the March and June quarters of 1956, the Court increased the basic wage by 4s. for males and 3s. for females on each occasion, and for September quarter increases of 4s. for males and 2s. 6d. for females were awarded.

The New South Wales Industrial Commission suspended quarterly basic wage adjustments from August, 1953, but resumed them in November, 1955, with the addition of the full amount indicated by the rise in the index number during the period of suspension. In the most recent quarter, an increase of 11s. for adult males in Sydney was made. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments were continued under special legislation until June quarter, 1956, after which they were suspended. In South Australia, the State basic wage has been pegged to the Commonwealth basic wage, the only adjustment since August, 1953, being an addition of 10s. for adult males as from June, 1956. The Western Australian Court of Arbitration made no adjustment to the basic wage after July, 1953, until August, 1955, when an increase was made on account of price rises in the June quarter. Four subsequent increases have been made, the latest of which operated from 29th October, 1956, the rise for adult males in Perth being 3s. 8d. In Tasmania, quarterly adjustments were suspended from August, 1953, to February, 1956, when the total increase, amounting to 17s. in Hobart, due to rises in the index number during the period of suspension, was added. Adjustments were made in the next two quarters, but the State Wages Boards decided to suspend automatic adjustments for a trial period thereafter.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index.				Common-wealth Basic Wage.	State Basic Wage.								
	June Quarter, 1956.		Sept. Quarter, 1956.		Males. ^a	Males.			Females.			Date of Operation. ^b		
	A	B	A	B										
					£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2299	2263	2370	2287	11	8	0	12	1	0	8	2	6	29. 10. 56
Sydney ..	2556	2501	2665	2559	12	13	0	13	14	0	10	5	6	Nov., 1956
Melbourne	2555	2497	2628	2506	12	5	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956c
Adelaide	2452	2413	2526	2426	12	1	0	12	1	0	9	1	0	June, 1956
Perth ..	2646	2646	2680	2671	12	6	0	13	5	2	8	12	4	29. 10. 56
Hobart ..	2639	2616	2703	2645	12	12	0	13	12	0	10	4	0	Aug., 1956c

Note: A includes and B excludes price movements due to potatoes and onions.

a Operative from beginning of first pay-period in June, 1956. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage is actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed until August, 1953. For later adjustments, see above.

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BRISBANE.

20th November, 1956.

The "C" Series Retail Price Index.

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1956.	Quarter Ended-				
				Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.	June, 1956.	Sept., 1956.
1. Aggregate - All Groups.								
Brisbane	863	1079	2288	2221	2223	2260	2299	2370
Toowoomba ..	851	1092	2326	2251	2262	2295	2343	2404
Rockhampton ..	861	1084	2320	2259	2263	2296	2327	2392
Townsville ..	912	1119	2410	2325	2351	2388	2424	2478
Bundaberg ..	841	1059	2268	2202	2216	2250	2280	2326
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	1082	2301	2233	2237	2274	2312	2380
Warwick	822	1073	2286	2223	2229	2256	2301	2357
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane	863	1079	2252	2209	2225	2234	2263	2287
Toowoomba ..	851	1092	2288	2239	2261	2266	2303	2320
Rockhampton ..	861	1084	2283	2251	2259	2265	2288	2319
Townsville ..	912	1119	2375	2318	2349	2357	2389	2406
Bundaberg ..	841	1059	2232	2194	2217	2222	2240	2249
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	1082	2264	2221	2238	2246	2275	2298
Warwick	822	1073	2248	2210	2227	2229	2261	2274
3. Food and Groceries.								
Brisbane	856	971	2674	2553	2530	2628	2684	2853
Toowoomba ..	814	1010	2741	2610	2600	2693	2764	2905
Rockhampton ..	895	1012	2694	2593	2588	2677	2698	2814
Townsville ..	955	1057	2819	2691	2704	2800	2825	2946
Bundaberg ..	903	1027	2716	2611	2600	2695	2724	2843
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	984	2691	2570	2552	2650	2701	2859
Warwick	846	1000	2745	2631	2619	2693	2765	2901
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane	856	971	2574	2518	2533	2555	2585	2624
Toowoomba ..	814	1010	2634	2575	2598	2612	2651	2673
Rockhampton ..	895	1012	2589	2568	2575	2589	2587	2606
Townsville ..	955	1057	2719	2672	2696	2711	2725	2743
Bundaberg ..	903	1027	2613	2587	2601	2617	2609	2625
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	984	2590	2538	2554	2573	2599	2634
Warwick	846	1000	2637	2595	2610	2619	2651	2667
5. Clothing and Footwear.								
Brisbane	829	1454	3138	3143	3136	3128	3134	3155
Toowoomba ..	829	1429	3143	3110	3121	3121	3152	3176
Rockhampton ..	845	1477	3137	3151	3127	3124	3129	3166
Townsville ..	840	1457	3169	3167	3164	3160	3167	3183
Bundaberg ..	839	1447	3162	3128	3156	3151	3170	3170
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	831	1454	3141	3143	3137	3130	3138	3160
Warwick	825	1441	3143	3138	3137	3132	3142	3159

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.